DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 430 EC 113 494

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TITLE Validation of Competencies in a CBTE Educational Assessments Course.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Exceptional Child Research; *Handicapped Children; *Performance Based Teacher Education; *Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

Twenty-three special education teachers and 13 special education student teachers rated 16 teacher competencies according to their importance. Results indicated that teachers were able to rate competencies, and that there was practically no disagreement in ratings between practicing special educators and student teachers. (CL)

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ED165430

VALIDATION OF COMPETENCIES IN A CBTE EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS COURSE

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ABSTRACT: Validation of Competencies in a CBTE Educational Assessments Course

Although Competency Based Teacher Education is rapidly becoming an expected teacher education procedure, there has been little study of CBTE. Primarily, in most courses of study there has been little attempt to validate the competencies stated as being necessary. Although there are several procedures that one could use to validate competencies, the present study simply asked present teachers, and student teachers, to rate the importance of stated competencies in a Special Education course in Educational Assessments.

Results indicated that teachers were able to rate competencies, and that there was practically no disagreement in ratings between practicing special educators and student teachers. All competencies listed were rated as being at least desirable and helpful or above. Thus, competencies previously listed were found to be rated as important by practicing special educators.

Validation of Competencies in a CBTE Educational Assessments Course

Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE) is now being accepted as a vital teacher education procedure. Burke (1976) reported that between 1968 and 1976 the number of teacher education programs espousing a CBTE approach had grown from 40 to over 400. Support for CBTE has evidently not been so much research-based as being an alternative to meet increasing demands for accountability, relevance, and cost effectiveness (Rosner and Kay, 1974). The concept has, now, been enthusiastically received as being "one of the most influential and important developments. . . to advance the process of schooling" (Rosner and Kay, 1974: 290).

Broad professional acceptance, however, does not mean that serious questions do not exist concerning CBTE. Significant questions surrounding CBTE involve the specification of necessary competencies. Who decides what the essential competencies should be, and who decides whether these are the most important skills to attain (Edgar and Neel, 1976)? One judgement that can be made, at least initially, is that the most important judges of necessary competencies are the practitioners-- teachers who now are finding out what was helpful and what was incomplete in their own professional preparation programs.

Unfortunately, most sets of competencies listed in a CBTE program have had little study regarding their validity. Burke and Cohen (1977) state that the final list of competencies is usually decided by the trainer based on the resources that are at hand. This may be the most effecient procedure available, but there is no guarantee that it is the most valid.

The present study was undertaken so that practitioners could rate the value of competencies listed in one course at Tennessee Technological University, the undergraduate Special Education course in Educational Assessment. Original competencies listed for this course were decided in a rather typical way (Burke and Cohen, 1977), by agreement among the Special Education faculty after informal appraisal of teachers and recognition of available resources (Institutional Notification. . ., 1976). This course was particularly relevant for such a study because of the controversies surrounding assessment itself.

Although formal assessment of the child who receives special education services has traditionally been done by someone other than the teacher, teachers are assuming greater responsibility for education decision making (Gillespie and Sitko, 1976). Thus, teachers are the ones who decide the usefulness of assessment information. There is considerable arguement, though, relative to both what the assessment process should be and what diagnostic information is the most important to collect (MacGinitie, 1974). The present study assumed that the current practitioner is the best judge of important assessment skills and strategies.

Method

Subjects.

Two groups of practitioners were selected for this study. Group 1 was elementary level special education teachers in the Upper Cumberland District who had completed an Educational Assessments course at Tennessee Technological University and who had been viewed by university faculty as having skills in educational assessment (n=30). Group 2 was all student teachers in Special Education from Tennessee Technological University during Spring Quarter, 1977 (n=18). Mean number years' teaching experience for present teachers was 4, and eleven had completed a Master's degree. Twenty-three were teaching in resource

rooms and seven in self-contained classes. Of the student teachers, thirteen were in resource rooms and five were in self-contained classes.

Procedures.

During Spring Quarter, 1977, questionnaires were mailed to all subjects in the study sample asking them to rate each of the 16 competencies listed on a 5-point scale, as to the degree it should be stressed. A rating of "5" indicated a vital and essential competency; a rating of "1" indicated a useless and valueless competency. Follow-up mailing and phone calls were placed to teachers who did not return the initial questionnaire. Visits and announcements in seminars were used as reminders to the student teachers.

Results.

Questionnaires were completed and returned by 76% of the present special education teachers (n=23) and 72% of the student teachers (n=13). Results by item are presented in Table I. Each item had a mean rating above 3.0 among both study samples. The rating was above 4.0 on 63% of the items. For no item was there a significant difference between ratings of student teachers and ratings of in-field special education teachers.

Insert Table I. About Here

Items with a grand mean between 3.0 and 4.0, that is, competencies which are desirable and helpful, and which should be discussed but not stressed, were items 1, 5, 8, 11, 12, and 13. These items deal more with necessary background knowledge than actual practice. Both special education teachers and student teachers evidently recognized some need for background knowledge but indicated a need for more stress on "hands on" kinds of skills. By looking at the four items with a grand mean of 4.5 or above- items 6, 7, 9, and 16-- one can see that the competencies felt to be most useful are the decision making and performance

items which definitely show the study samples' emphases. In fact, the item ranked highest, item 16, indicates that teachers recognize the importance of assessment is that it should lead to a remediation plan.

Conclusions

Results of this study indicate that teachers are willing to have some involvement with program development and evaluation at a university (notes on returned questionnaires definitely bore this out) and that they are ready to judge course content. In a CBTE teacher education program, for specific competencies in Special Education assessment, both present teachers and student teachers indicated a need for background information. They both more strongly desired, though, "hands on" practical work. The university teacher educator thus faces the challenge of finding ways to communicate background material in a most practical kind of way. This can be a formidable task.

Another conclusion, and a relatively frustrating one, lies in the finding that all items were at the upper end of the scale. No items received a total rating as being helpful but not important, nor useless and valueless. The fact that there were no discriminating items is a positive indicator to the present special education preparation program. On the other hand, it could also indicate that ego involvement of those who have been students in a teacher education program restricts them from honestly criticizing that program.

A third conclusion must be a criticism of the study design itself. Although a satisfactory number of responses was returned, it was disappointing that the number of responses was not greater-- especially after much effort at follow-up was undertaken. Perhaps this is a result of using a qestionnaire format. Teachers are presently burdened with a large amount of paper work, and one more form for them to complete may simply be asking too much. Lack of any really

discriminating items in this study may have resulted from using a Likert-type scale. Conceivably, more discrimination could have been built in by using some modification of a Q-sort or other forced-rank technique.

Two important points were apparent from the results of this study. A CBTE course, at least the Special Education course in Educational Assessment, needs to put most emphasis on practical applications. Practitioners feel that background history, terminology, development, and so on should have less emphasis. Also, this study indicated that special educators in the field and student teachers are quite similar in their attitudes concerning necessary assessment competencies.

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Table I. Ratings of Competencies by Special Education Teachers and Student Teachers

Competency Item: The Prospective Teacher Shall Be Able To:		Mean	sd	Grand Mean
1. Demonstrate knowledge of the evaluation process outlined in the Tennessee Assessment Plan.	Group 1*	3.77	1.11**	3.97
	Group 2	4.31	.85	
2. Demonstrate knowledge of definitions, characteristics, and components of screening, assessment, and verification.	Group 1	4.39	.72	4.49
	Group 2	4.69	.63	
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the function and composition of a multidisciplinary team.	Group 1	4.17	1.03	4.03
	Group 2	3.77	1.09	
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the meaning of testing and related terms.	Group 1	3.86	1.13	4.03
	Group 2	4.31	.75	
5. Define terminology and discuss statistical procedures used in standardized test development.	Group 1	3.09	.90	3.25
	Group 2	3.54	.88	
6. Select appropriate tests to assess pupil performance in a given content or skill area.	Group 1	4.48	.99	4.55
	Group 2	4.69	.63	
7. Demonstrate the ability to administer criterion and norm-referenced tests to determine a child's level of functioning and strengths and weaknesses in social, academic, cognitive, motor, self-help, and other areas.	Group 1	4.48	.95	4.53
	Group 2	4.62	.65	

(Table 1. cont.)

8. Demonstrate knowledge of the contents and use of testing manuals.	Group 1	3.78	.80	3.91
	Group 2	4.15	.90	
9. Demonstrate the ability to analyze a test protocal for the purpose of gaining information concerning a child's strengths and weaknesses.	Group 1	4.41	.85	4.51
	Group 2	4.69	.48	
10. Articulate in writing the strengths and weaknesses of a particular child's skills in areas of academic, social, motor, perceptual, and self-help skills from information secured by testing.	Group 1	4.35	.98	4.31
	Group 2	4.23	.73	
11. Discuss the differences in standardized, norm-referenced , and criterion-referenced tests. In addition, the student will cite advantages and disadvantages of each, the proper use of each, and the type(s) of scores derived from each.	Group 1	3.17	.89	3.33
	Group 2	3.62	.87	
12. Demonstrate the ability to formulate a criterion-referenced test which will enable the teacher to gain information about a child's ability in a specific area.	Group 1	3.91	.90	3.89
	Group 2	3.85	.80	
13. Demonstrate knowledge of the correct procedures for development of certain types of criterion-referenced items.	Group 1	3.67	.91	3.57
	Group 2	3.38	.87	

(Table 1. cont.)

14. Demonstrate the ability to interpret reports and results from measurement on children (e.g., medical reports, psychological studies, diagnostic tests).	Group 1	4.13	1.01	4.29
	Group 2	4.46	.78	
15. Demonstrate the ability to integrate diagnostic assessment information into concise statements concerning the child's performance.	Group 1	4.33	.80	4.32
	Group 2	4.31	.85	
16. Develop a basic plan for remediation of a child's specific weaknesses.	Group 1	4.83	.65	4.81
	Group 2	4.77	.44	

*Group 1 = Special Education teachers

Group 2 = Student teachers in Special Education

** All Group 1 - Group 2 differences nonsignificant at the .05 level